

St. Mary's Catholic Church
406 E. Savidge Street
Spring Lake, MI 49456

(616) 842-1702



Congratulations to both of you on your engagement and your decision to enter into the beautiful vocation of married life! To help you with your planning, here are our policies regarding getting married at St. Mary's Parish. The first step is to ***please read these policies carefully so that you fully understand them in advance, and then sign and return them to the parish secretary, Mary Reck.*** Then the pastor Fr. Bill Vander Werff will contact you to schedule an initial meeting.

As Catholics, we believe that marriage is a sacrament instituted by Jesus Christ to give couples who have chosen to make a lifelong commitment to each other the grace to live out this beautiful vocation. The purpose of any marriage is two-fold: for the mutual good of the spouses (the unitive aspect), and for the purpose of having and raising children in a loving and stable home environment (the procreative aspect). As such, couples who desire to receive the Catholic sacrament of marriage must promise to be faithful to their spouse for life and to be open to having children and raising them in the Catholic faith. It is also an expectation of any couples who wish to get married at St. Mary's, whether they are parishioners here or not, that they be practicing their faith (i.e., attending Mass on Sundays and Holy Days).

It is possible for a Catholic to marry a baptized, non-Catholic Christian or a non-baptized person. However, in this situation, both parties must agree to respect the beliefs and conscience of the other, and the Catholic party does have to promise to do his or her best to ensure that their children be baptized and raised Catholic.

Scheduling Weddings

Weddings can be reserved a minimum of 6 months and up to a maximum of 16 months in advance from the date of the couple's initial meeting with the pastor. Wedding and rehearsal dates and times will only be reserved on our parish calendar when the deposit is paid (see below).

Please consult with the pastor regarding your wedding date and time. Availability is subject to the parish schedule and liturgical requirements of the Catholic Church. Weddings are not scheduled on Sundays, Holy Days of Obligation, St. Mary's Parish Festival Saturday, and the weekends of the Coast Guard Festival. Due to our Mass schedule, the latest time weddings can begin here on Saturdays is 1:00 pm, and all photos must be completed by no later than 3:00 pm.

Fee Policy

The fees for weddings of active, registered parishioners at St. Mary's are as follows:

- Musician – Diane Murray - \$200
- Cantor (TBD) - \$125
- Wedding coordinator – Kathy Reminder \$125

- Church fee - \$50

The fees to the musician, cantor, and wedding coordinator should be paid by check directly to them and delivered to the parish office by the Monday prior to the date of the wedding, or at least 4 days before the date of the wedding.

In addition to these fees, there are costs for marriage preparation – please see below under Marriage Preparation.

The parish fee of \$50 serves as a deposit and should be paid as soon as possible to reserve the date and time of the wedding on the parish calendar. It includes use of the church and some of the marriage preparation-related costs and paperwork. [An active parishioner is one who attends Mass weekly and has been contributing to the church collection on a weekly basis for at least six months.]

The fees for non-registered couples or for parishioners who are not contributing on a weekly basis to the parish collection are as follows:

- Musician – Diane Murray - \$200
- Cantor (TBD) - \$125
- Wedding coordinator – Kathy Reminder \$125
- Church fee - \$400

The fees to the musician, cantor, and wedding coordinator should be paid by check directly to them and delivered to the parish office by the Monday prior to the date of the wedding, or at least 4 days before the date of the wedding.

In addition to these fees, there are costs for marriage preparation – please see below under Marriage Preparation.

It is expected that couples who are not St. Mary’s parishioners be attending Mass weekly at their home parish and complete their marriage preparation at their home parish. They should then arrange with their parish to have their marriage paperwork sent to St. Mary’s no less than 6 weeks prior to the wedding.

An initial deposit of \$250 for non-registered individuals or parishioners who are not contributing to the parish on a regular basis is required to reserve the dates for the wedding and rehearsal. It should be paid after the first meeting with the pastor. The balance of the church fee is due when the fees to the musician, cantor, and wedding coordinator are due; i.e., the Monday before the wedding date. Payment must be received in full before the wedding can take place.

Guest Officiants

All weddings officiated by non-parish clergy must request and receive delegation by the pastor of St. Mary’s. They must observe all diocesan guidelines regarding clergy. If they are not from the Diocese of Grand Rapids, they must obtain a letter of suitability from their bishop or religious superior and have it sent to the Diocese of Grand Rapids (they will be familiar with this requirement). Contact information for the visiting priest is due when the deposit is made. The couple should expect to pay a stipend (not included in the wedding fee) to the visiting priest or deacon who celebrates the wedding. Non-Catholic clergy may participate in the wedding ceremony, but the Catholic minister must receive the vows and be

the primary celebrant.

Liturgical Environment / Decorations

All questions concerning flowers and other decorations should be directed to the parish wedding coordinator; what is permitted will be at her discretion. Advent and Lent are special seasons of the Church and so have greater restrictions for what is permitted, so these are not ideal times to schedule a wedding.

Photography

Please note the following:

- More than one photographer is permitted before and after the ceremony, but only one during the ceremony itself.
- The photographer(s) must review their plans with our parish wedding coordinator before the ceremony.
- During the ceremony, the photographer should remain at the back of the church behind the congregation or off to the side.
- The only furniture that can be moved for photos is the wedding kneeler.
- No flash photography is permitted during the ceremony.
- Video is permitted as long as the placement of the equipment does not distract or detract from the liturgy and remains in a fixed position.

Liturgical Ritual

All weddings at St. Mary's follow the guidelines set forth in the Catholic Church's *Order of Celebrating Matrimony* and as set by the competent Church authorities. Traditions such as the unity candle are not a normal part of the rite of marriage and should be reserved for the reception or immediately before the ceremony rather than during the ceremony itself. Please refer any questions regarding the liturgy to the pastor or the parish wedding coordinator. All music must be approved liturgical music. Recorded music is not permitted.

Rehearsal

Our wedding coordinator will direct the rehearsal. The date and time should be decided with her well in advance; normally it takes place the evening before the wedding, provided there are no scheduling conflicts. Please make sure that anyone who has a role in the wedding (wedding party, readers, parents) be present for the rehearsal and arrives promptly. Please allow about 30-40 minutes for the rehearsal.

Proper Decorum in Church

No rice, birdseed, confetti or similar substances may be thrown in the church building or on church property. Also, please no gum, food, or drink other than water in the church.

Substance Abuse

Use of alcohol and illegal substances on site is prohibited. Violation of this policy will forfeit deposits and fees paid and terminate the wedding celebration. Anyone found under the influence of alcohol or drugs will be asked to leave the premises; wedding couples under the influence risk invalidation of marriage.

Marriage Preparation

The steps involved in marriage preparation at St. Mary's include:

- Choose your wedding readings from the *Together for Life* booklet which you will receive at your first meeting with the pastor.
- Please contact our parish wedding coordinator Ms. Kathy Reminder at (616) 846-2684 after your date has been reserved to schedule a time to plan your wedding liturgy.
- Watch the *Beloved* series on marriage. This is available online through our parish subscription to FORMED, which is a database of Catholic books, videos, etc. To access it, go to www.stmarysl.formed.org (If you need a code, use: J9XHNY).
- Complete a pre-marriage inventory (FOCCUS): this is basically a survey to help the two of you get to know each other better and think about and discuss topics you may have never addressed before.
- After completing it, you will meet with a married couple from the parish to discuss your results.
- Complete a Pre-Cana marriage retreat. We will send you a list of upcoming retreats approved by the parish. When you have completed it, please drop off a copy of your certificate. ***Please note the fee for this is paid directly to the parish where you complete the retreat; the cost is typically around \$100.***
- Complete a Theology of the Body retreat, which takes place on a Friday evening and a Saturday in January at a parish in the Grand Rapids area, dates & location TBD. (Unfortunately, this retreat is only offered in our area once a year, so if you are unable to attend before your wedding, we ask that you attend the one the following year, even if this is after your wedding. The retreat is beneficial both to engaged and married couples.) ***[The cost is \$200 which should be paid directly to St. Mary's; then we issue payment for all our attending couples to the coordinators of the retreat.]***
- ***No earlier than 6 months before the wedding date***, contact the parishes where you were baptized and ask them to send us your baptism certificates including notations of all the sacraments you have received.
- Please contact our parish music director Mrs. Diane Murray at (616) 638-0707 or dmurray@stmarysl.org to plan the hymns and music for your wedding ceremony.
- Complete a class on Natural Family Planning: <https://ccli.org/learn-nfp-from-ccli/> ***Please note that there is a separate fee of approximately \$135.00 payable to the company that gives the course.***
- Please bring both copies of your marriage license (which you can apply for up to 33 days before the wedding) to our parish secretary at least two days before the day of the wedding.

Name of Bride: _____
Printed name

Signature

Phone number: _____

Email: _____

Name of Groom: _____
Printed name

Signature

Phone number: _____

Email: _____

St. Mary's Parish - Effective September 7, 2023